DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 467 435 TM 034 317

AUTHOR	Hamilton, Laura S.
TITLE	Benefits of a Statewide Student Identifier System for California. Testimony Presented to the California State Senate Education Committee (April 24, 2002). RAND Testimony.
INSTITUTION	RAND Education, Santa Monica, CA.
REPORT NO	RAND-CT-197
PUB DATE	2002-04-00
NOTE	7p.
AVAILABLE FROM	RAND Distribution Services, 1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407 ($5). Tel: 310-451-7002; Fax: 310-451-6915; e-mail: order@rand.org. For full text: http://www.rand.org.
PUB TYPE	Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Research; *Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Identification; School Statistics; *Secondary School Students; *State Programs; *Student Records

ABSTRACT

This statement outlines reasons why a student identifier linked to students' STAR test scores and demographic data would offer the opportunity to improve the quality of information California uses to evaluate both schools and programs and would facilitate better service provision to students. The primary benefit of a statewide student identified (ID) would be the ability to link students' records over time, regardless of whether students stay in the same schools or districts. Such an ID would allow researchers and other users to answer questions about the growth trajectories of different types of students. A student ID would make it possible to examine students' transitions from one school to another, and it would dramatically improve the quality of research and evaluation that is done on local and state initiatives. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

TM

ED 467 435

TESTIMONY

RAND

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Warren

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Benefits of a Statewide Student Identifier System for California

Laura S. Hamilton

CT-197

April 2002

Testimony submitted to the California State Senate Education Committee on April 24, 2002

TM034317

RAND Education

The RAND testimony series contains the statements of RAND staff members as prepared for delivery. The opinions and conclusions expressed in this written testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research.

RAND is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of its research sponsors.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Published 2002 by RAND
1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
201 North Craig Street, Suite 102, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
RAND URL: http://www.rand.org
To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information,
contact Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;
Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

About RAND Education

For three decades, RAND Education has helped to identify and analyze the complex problems facing the nation's education system. RAND Education is a nationally recognized and respected source of high quality, rigorous and independent research and analysis applied to almost every aspect of the education system. RAND analysis has made a difference in how policymakers and citizens understand and respond to problems in our educational system.

RAND was among the first organizations to do rigorous independent evaluations of school reform programs. We established an empirical basis for determining the validity of various approaches to testing how much students learn. Recent research has identified both the costs and the benefits of different methods of reducing class size across America.

The mission of RAND's Education Program is to bring accurate data and careful objective analysis to the national debate on education policy. We identify trends, problems, and opportunities, and strive to give the policy community and the American public a clear picture of choices they face in educating America's citizens.

RAND Education research is supported by funding from federal government grants, foundations, state and local governments, and private sector organizations. RAND Education disseminates its work widely to policy makers, education practioners and research communities, and to the general public. The goal of the dissemination efforts is to translate research findings into practical improvements for children and schools

A profile of RAND Education, abstracts of its publications, and ordering information can be found on the RAND Education home page on the World Wide Web at www.rand.org/education.

For information about RAND Education, contact:

RAND Education
1700 Main Street
P.O. Box 2138
Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
Phone: (310) 393-0411, ext. 6171
FAX: (310) 451-7039
Email: educaton@rand.org

Benefits of a Statewide Student Identifier System for California

Testimony Presented to the California State Senate Education Committee

By Laura S. Hamilton
RAND Education

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on SB 1453, which is currently being discussed by the California State Senate Education Committee. RAND is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. This statement is based on a variety of sources, including research conducted at RAND. However, the opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the agencies or others sponsoring its research.

I am a Behavioral Scientist at RAND, where I conduct research in the areas of accountability, assessment, and school reform evaluation. In addition to my research work, I recently completed a policy brief for EdSource detailing the need for student-level data in California.

The information California currently uses to evaluate schools and educational programs is often incomplete, leading to possible errors in accountability decisions and lack of conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of educational interventions. Many other states have already adopted a mechanism for linking students' scores over time, which is an important element of a comprehensive accountability system. Assessment data is far more valuable for improving teaching and learning, identifying best practices, and determining program effectiveness when those data are valid and reliable, and when they provide a clear picture of the value added by a school or program.

A unique student identifier linked to students' STAR test scores and demographic data would offer the opportunity to improve the quality of information California uses to evaluate both schools and programs and would facilitate better service provision to students. The primary benefit of a statewide ID would be the ability to link students'

The opinions and conclusions expressed in this written testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research.

records over time, regardless of whether students remain in the same school or district. The availability of linked data has several significant advantages.

First, it would improve the accuracy of accountability-related decisions by removing the effects of mobility from the interpretation of changes in test scores over time.

Second, it would allow researchers and other users to answer questions about the growth trajectories of different types of students. For example, one school may be successful at improving reading scores among particularly low-performing students while allowing achievement at higher levels to stagnate, whereas another may neglect the low performers and instead focus on raising scores at the top of the distribution. Use of only aggregate gains would mask this important difference.

Third, a statewide student identifier is necessary for examining students' transitions from one school to another. For example, evaluations of middle schools are hampered by an inability to link 6th-graders' performance to scores those students attained when they were in elementary school. Similarly, understanding how achievement is affected by the sometimes high mobility rates observed among many low-income students requires an ability to link students' scores as they move from one school or district to another.

Finally, a statewide ID system would dramatically improve the quality of research and evaluation that can be done on local and state initiatives, and would probably reduce the costs of those studies as well. RAND researchers have recently been involved in a number of state-funded evaluations, most notably the multi-year class-size reduction study. Unlike researchers who studied class-size reduction in Tennessee (a study that has achieved widespread recognition and that showed significant positive effects of reduced classes), researchers in California could not track individual students to determine how many years they participated in reduced-size classes. Instead, they had to rely on a combination of district-level aggregated student data and statewide data for cohorts of students. In part because of the inadequacies of California's statewide data system, the evaluators' ability to assess the impact of the program on raising student achievement is

weaker than it would be if longitudinally linked data were available. RAND's ongoing study of charter schools in California faces similar problems, particularly given the high mobility rates associated with many charter schools.

As this discussion indicates, a statewide student ID system would contribute to improved teaching and learning in California by improving the quality of accountability decisions as well as research and evaluation.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").